

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SWEDISH PROBLEMS WITH ASSYRIAN REFUGEES

1. SWEDEN IS STILL WRESTLING WITH THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO DEAL WITH ASSYRIAN IMMIGRANTS WHO HAVE POURED INTO THE COUNTRY IN THE PAST FEW YEARS IN ANTICIPATION OF BEING GIVEN THE RIGHT TO STAY. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATISTICS, ABOUT 7,000 ASSYRIANS ARE RESIDENT IN SWEDEN, AMOUNTING TO ABOUT ONE-SIXTH OF ALL NON-NORDIC IMMIGRANTS TO THE COUNTRY. ON NOVEMBER 12, 1976, IN A COMPROMISE GESTURE, THE GOS ALLOWED ALL ASSYRIANS WHO HAD ENTERED SWEDEN BY THAT DATE TO STAY, WHILE RULING THAT ALL WHO SOUGHT ENTRY OR RESIDENCE AFTER THAT TIME WOULD BE REFUSED AND DEPORTED. SINCE THAT TIME SOME 700 ASSYRIANS HAVE BEEN TURNED BACK AT SWEDISH BORDERS. AN ADDITIONAL 607 HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE RESIDING ILLEGALLY IN THE COUNTRY. OF THE LATTER, 150 CASES ARE BEFORE THE IMMIGRATION BOARD FOR A DECISION, 67 CASES REFUSED
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PERMISSION TO STAY BY THE BOARD HAVE BEEN APPEALED TO THE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, 73 HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO STAY, 317 HAVE BEEN ORDERED DEPORTED, AND 155 HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN REMOVED FROM THE COUNTRY AS OF JANUARY 23.

2. ABOUT 250 ASSYRIANS HAVE BEEN RESIDING IN LABOR MARKET BOARD CAMPS IN ANTICIPATION OF A DECISION ON

THEIR FATE. AS IT BECOMES CLEARER THAT GOS WILL NOT BUDGE FROM ITS ORIGINAL DECISION TO REMOVE INELIGIBLE OR ILLEGAL ASSYRIANS FROM THE COUNTRY, SEVERAL DOZEN HAVE ALREADY FLED THE FACILITIES AND GONE UNDERGROUND, SEEKING REFUGE WITH RELATIVES OR FRIENDS. THE SITUATION HAS ALSO BECOME DISTASTEFUL FOR THE AUTHORITIES BECAUSE OF SEVERAL UGLY INCIDENTS, INCLUDING ONE ON JANUARY 21 IN WHICH A HYSTERICAL 23-YEAR-OLD MOTHER WHO HAD HIDDEN HER TWO CHILDREN WAS FORCED ONTO A PLANE WHICH WAS TO TAKE HER BACK TO TURKEY. THE PLANE'S PILOT REFUSED TO CARRY HER AND THE GOS IS NOW HOPING TO DEPORT HER TO WEST GERMANY INSTEAD. OTHER CASES OF ASSYRIANS WHO HAVE GONE UNDERGROUND IN HOPES OF AVOIDING DEPORTATION HAVE ALSO RECEIVED WIDE ATTENTION IN THE PRESS.

3. MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION OLA ULLSTEN, HOWEVER, DENIED THAT SWEDISH POLICIES SOUGHT TO SEPARATE FAMILIES, POINTING OUT THAT ASSYRIANS HAVE A MUCH MORE "EXTENDED" DEFINITION OF FAMILY THAT INCLUDES PARENTS OF NON-MINORS, AUNTS, UNCLES, AND SO FORTH. HE ALSO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT ASSYRIANS NO LONGER COME TO SWEDEN IN MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT THE COUNTRY IS OPEN TO THEM, BUT INSTEAD TRY TO TAKE A CHANCE THAT AUTHORITIES WILL NOT EXPEL THEM.

4. CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAS COME FROM ASSYRIANS' SWEDISH LAWYERS, WHO ACCUSE THE GOS OF NOT APPLYING UN

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CONVENTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ON FAMILY RIGHTS TO BE REUNITED OVER BORDERS. SWEDISH CHURCHES HAVE ALSO TAKEN UP THE ASSYRIANS' CASE ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, ARGUING THAT EXPULSION OF PEOPLE WHOSE FAMILY AND FRIENDS LIVE IN SWEDEN AND WHO HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GO BACK TO IN TURKEY WOULD BE INHUMANE. EVEN STRONGER EXCEPTION TO CURRENT PROCEDURES WAS TAKEN BY LIBERAL PARTY MP OLLE WASTBERG, WHO ACCUSED THE AUTHORITIES OF CONTINUING A LONG HISTORY OF INTOLERANCE TO REFUGEES BEGINNING WITH THE TURNING AWAY OF JEWISH REFUGEES FROM GERMANY IN THE 1930'S, AND CONTINUING AFTER WORLD WAR II WITH THE EXPELLING OF BALTIC REFUGEES AND LATER OF GYPSIES.

5. ONE PROBLEM IS THAT SWEDES DO NOT ACCEPT ASSYRIAN ASSERTIONS THAT THEY ARE PERSECUTED MINORITY IN A MOSLEM TURKEY. THEY ACCEPT THE OFFICIAL TURKISH VIEW, RESTATED IN AN INTERVIEW IN SVENSKA DAGBLADET OF JANUARY 24 WITH TURKISH AMBASSADOR MEHMET BAYDUR THAT NO RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION EXISTS IN TURKEY AND THAT IT IS "PURE NONSENSE" THAT EXPELLED ASSYRIANS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO REPRESSION ON THEIR RETURN HOME. BAYDUR ALSO COMPLAINED ABOUT SWEDISH VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR TURKISH

CITIZENS INTRODUCED AT TIME OF ASSYRIAN BAN IN
NOVEMBER 1976, CALLING IT PURE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
HIS COUNTRY. HOWEVER, HE STATED IT WAS NOT SURPRISING
THAT MANY ASSYRIANS, WHO COME FROM THE MOST IMPROVERISHED
AREAS OF TURKEY, SEEK TO FIND A NEW HOME IN SWEDEN FOR
ECONOMIC REASONS.
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